

Annika Kokko

## Landscape as a Timekeeper

During the Living in the Landscape spring school, I became more interested in my surroundings than I had previously been. My interest grew while I read articles, took part in discussions during seminars and spent a lot of time in nature. While dwelling in different landscapes, I started to notice different shapes and details around me. That got me inspired to investigate different forms of the landscape more closely. I decided to narrow my research to contain only the forms of forests. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023), form means the shape and structure of something as distinguished from its material. It can include shapes, lines, textures and details. I used an art-based research method to discover more about the different forms that can be found in forests. I chose to use clay as my research tool. My task was to find out what the forest wants to tell me by its forms. I started my investigation in the High Coast area of Sweden during our fieldwork week and continued my research back in my hometown Rovaniemi, Finland.

### **The Theory Behind My Practice**

According to Ingold (2002), landscape is what you see

*Figure 1. Making the first piece on the High Coast, Sweden.  
Image: Saara Lappeteläinen, 2023.*



all around when you are standing outside: a contoured and textured surface replete with diverse objects – living and non-living, natural and artificial. In a landscape, each component enfolds within its essence the totality of its relations with the other (Ingold, 2002). In my art-based research, I was interested in investigating these contoured and textured surfaces in a landscape and how they have formed into their current shape in collaboration with living and non-living things. Ingold (2002) emphasised that a landscape forms in the process of time and life cycles. Landscapes are always in the process of changing (Ingold, 2002).

I chose art-based research as my research method because, by using art, I can obtain an interesting and experiential way to do my research. According to McNiff (2007), art-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process – the actual making of artistic expressions in all the different forms of art – as a primary way of understanding and examining during a research process. Art can have many different roles and it can be used in several stages of the research (McNiff, 2007). In my research, art is a way of collecting data and presenting my results.

### **The Process of Printing Forms of the Forest**

My research process ended up being a very physical task. I carried my research tool, clay, with me while wandering around the forests. I had many kilos of clay in my backpack as well as some tools such as a rolling pin and a knife. In addition to these, I carried a few wooden boards to put underneath the clay artworks so I could carry them back from the forest.

My process began on the High Coast. While I was wandering around the forest and walking by the sea, I paid close attention to the shapes, details and textures I saw around me. When I found particularly interesting forms, I laid a piece of clay onto them and pressed



*Figure 2. Image: Saara Lappeteläinen, 2023.*

*Figure 3. Image: Annika Kokko, 2023.*



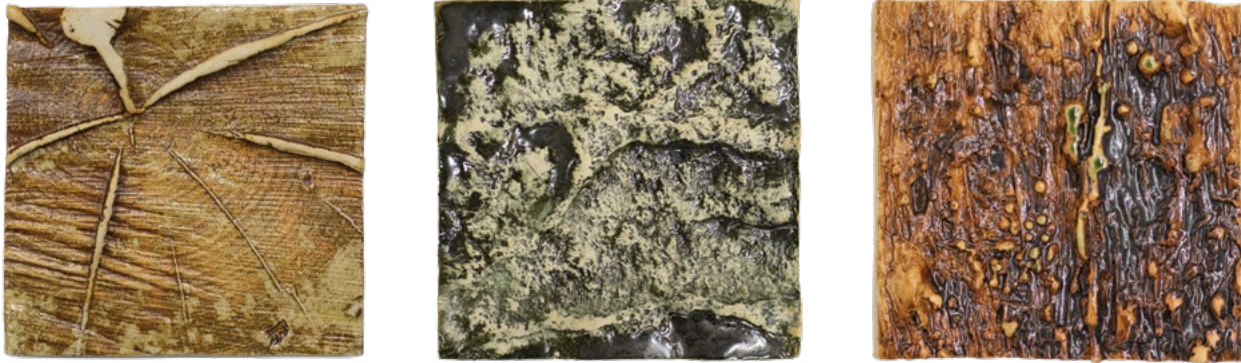


the surface into the clay. I continued this process when I got back home. I wandered in the forests of Rovaniemi, seeking all kinds of forms that could be found from the ground, trees, stones and so on. I continued my process throughout the summer and spent a lot of time dwelling in nature. At the end of the summer, I had multiple pieces of clay tiles that contained imprints of surfaces from different forest landscapes.

I finished the tiles in my university's art studio. I cut all of them to be the same size and made some final touches on them. After that, I left them to dry for a few weeks. When they had completely dried, I fired them in a kiln, glazed them and fired them again. Finally, I selected a collection of six tiles to be in the final art piece and hung them on a wooden board.

*Figure 4. Process. Figure 5. Clay tiles in the process of drying.  
Image: Annika Kokko, 2023.*





Figures 6. Images: Annika Kokko, 2023.

## Conclusion

While I was investigating the forms of different living and non-living things that I found from the forest, I realised that I was able to see the history of the landscape. I realised that I was able to see boundless amounts of signs that time, animals and people have left in the landscape. Ingold (2002) indicated that the forms of a landscape are generated by movement; however, these forms are congealed in a solid medium. A landscape is the most solid appearance in which history can declare itself. Thanks to their solidity, features of a landscape remain available for inspection long after the movements that gave rise to them have ceased (Ingold, 2002). Through my art-based research using clay as my research tool, I was able to experience this phenomenon in a very concrete and meaningful way. Ingold emphasised that a landscape changes – and change is itself an intrinsic aspect of our experience of landscape (Ingold, 2002). During my art-making process, I was able to truly see and feel the landscape like Ingold had described it – as a never-ending process, always changing.

*Imagine a film of the landscape, shot years, centuries, even millennia. Slightly speeded up, plants appear to engage in very animal-like movements, trees flex their limbs without any prompting from the winds. Speeded up rather more, glaciers flow like rivers and even the earth begins to move. At yet greater speeds solid rock bends, buckles and flows like molten metal. Thus the rhythmic pattern of activity for all so-called living things, which nests within the life-process of the world. (Ingold, 2002, p. 201)*

## References

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